





EVANGELICALISM (SO CALLED) A DISPARAGEMENT  
OF GRACE.

A LETTER

TO THE

REV. HUGH M'NEILE, D.D.,

CONTAINING

STRICTURES ON HIS RECENT LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF EXETER.

BY

A LIVERPOOL LAYMAN.

LIVERPOOL :  
DEIGHTON AND LAUGHTON.  
LONDON; JOSEPH MASTERS.  
1851.



## LETTER.

---

REV. SIR,

The observation of many very remarkable incongruities which it contains, induced me, some twelve months ago, to institute a particular enquiry into the fifth section of the chapter on Baptism, in your work entitled "The Church and the Churches," &c., which announces as its subject, "The nature of the efficacy which it is scriptural to ascribe to this ordinance." The character of my advancing discoveries amazed me, and I was greatly inclined to think that a public exposure of the egregious inconsistencies to which a theory, irreconcilable with the true demands of his position, had insensibly compelled a clergyman of character and conscientiousness, could not but be of advantage towards inculcating a doubt of its truth among those who claim to be his adherents. Other circumstances of the case, however, concurring with natural diffidence, restrained me from the undertaking. The long time which had elapsed since the appearance of your work, and the hackneyed character which the controversy had assumed, denied that interest without which publication is officious presumption, or a useless labour.

You have, however, in another and perhaps more imposing form, given a fresh circulation to these opinions. You have deemed them of sufficient weight and importance to bring them in the same guise under the notice of one, whose almost peculiar domain, we may say, this question of Baptism seems to be — the Bishop of Exeter. And slightly paraphrasing your own words, I shall make no further apology for thus commenting on that

renewed exposition than what the paraphrase itself may afford. "It may not be uninteresting to you to know what some of the laity in your own town think upon this subject," (and of your position as a subscriber to the English Prayer Book,) "and a public address to you under existing circumstances can scarcely be deemed intrusive in any member of the Church."

I make this reference to your book, because I do not intend to lose sight of it in these remarks on your letter, but where any deficiency in the statement of your views in the one can be supplied by a greater explicitness in the other, I shall not fail to take the advantage of reference to both.

The primary object of your letter would appear to be not to inoculate the Bishop with your views, but to convince him of the indifference of all views, as regards right of undisturbed possession of cure of souls in the Church of England. Your plea is for compromise between two parties, alleged to be mutually as repugnant to the Church as they are opposed to each other. You do not aim at vindicating your integrity, but at securing your safety; not to establish your own consistency with subscribing obligations, but mutual implication with an opposite school in a sham perpetrated upon the Church of England, in whose overthrow the destruction of both will be effectuated, and in whose maintenance therefore the interests of both are concerned. Your plea positively appears to me an apology for imposture, rather than a testimony to sincerity; unquestionably a device of expediency, and not an avowal of truth. But if we take this as a confession from Evangelicalism, how can we accept the stigma it casts upon the Church? That divine Institution you seem willing to degrade from its office of conservator of the faith, into an amalgam of heterogeneous doctrines and opposing sects. Your maxim, indeed, is the converse of "truth before peace," for you invite the champions of conflicting systems, one of which must be false, to an embrace, which at that moment must seal the sacrifice of truth to toleration. You seem to me to be striking a blow at truth with one hand, and presenting a bludgeon to your former antagonist with the other, bidding him to imitate the stroke, that at last, overcoming this



the common enemy, mutual differences may cease in a fate which both have contributed to accomplish, and that both may make merry over the remains! Your plea I am colouring strongly, for, without making its author responsible for its darkest shade, I am anxious its real deformity should appear. But really, when the dispute is as you state between two systems fundamentally opposed to each other, one of which is very damaging and very dangerous error, how can it be borne that the Church, whose claim to be a guardian of the faith of Christ consists in rigidity, not in flexibility, in principle, not in compromise, should be made, by formal toleration of both, a mere secular convenience for the accommodation of conflicting religionists at the expense of inexorable truth?

The ease with which you have taken for granted all parties' admission of flagrant inconsistencies in the Prayer Book, has betrayed you into admissions very damaging to your theory. That that theory must compel you to look upon the Church's statements as involved in confusion, it needed not the positive confession of the present pamphlet to assure those who were acquainted with the baptismal doctrine (?) of your larger work. Your own formless conceptions of the subject are quite enough to turn the most exquisite proportions into deformity, and the most harmonious colours into a blotch. The eye is jaundiced, and can see nothing but yellow. You have gazed so long upon the sun of your system, that every object seems tainted from its own original appearance. But this confession furnishes the opposite school with such an argument, that unless you had been sufficiently acute to impute to them a similar one, you could never have been candid enough to make it. The issue, however, is far different from your design. You distort one part of the Prayer Book into Puritanism, and then, because another presents less malleability, place the legitimacy of your own process in a reproach on its consistency. It seems not to have struck you that there may be, as there is, another theory, which in denying Puritanism to be in the Prayer Book, at the same time shows it to be con-

sistent. And, indeed, it is one very happy incident at the opening, that while the partial sanction of your position rests on the shame of your Church, her vindication, and the integrity of the Bishop, stand or fall together. Let us consider the "facts" you adduce, to illustrate the inconsistency of the Prayer Book, and the need of either tolerated difference or an altered standard.

"One who holds Baptismal Regeneration can quote from the Prayer Book, that Baptism is Regeneration; the other can quote from the Prayer Book, that Baptism is a sign of Regeneration. One can quote concerning all baptised persons, that they are thereby made the children of grace; another can quote, that in those only who worthily receive Baptism it has a wholesome effect or operation." (p. 4.)

And to this you add, in a tone of confidence, "This is not an opinion. It is matter of fact." Surely it is so. And what does it prove? May not, in the first instance, both attributes be predicated of Baptism with equal truth? Nay, are not both, in the very *same* definition, predicated by the Catechism as necessary concomitants of the sacrament? For instance, there is no dispute as to Baptism's being a sign. The Catechism which you quote as asserting the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, also asserts of Baptism that it is a sign. If it were not a sign, it could not be a sacrament. "Sacraments be not *only* signs," says Bishop Jewel: "it were blasphemy so to say," intimating that they *are* signs. "God will have it (Baptism) embraced not *only* as a sign or token what we receive, . . . but also as an instrument or means *whereby* we receive grace," says Hooker. But these are what you deny as incompatible properties. Both Jewel and Hooker assert of Baptism that it is a sign. The question being, of the other assertion, that it is the means of conveying that grace which it signifies, or, in a more condensed phrase, that it is a sacrament as well as a sign. But you wish us to acknowledge that the Prayer Book, in affirming of Baptism that it is a sign, contradicts her other affirmation that it is a sacrament. In short, you suppose that when she says it is a sign, she



means a sign *only*. Just as, if we should say of man that he is matter, we should be interpreted to mean matter *only*, and to be inconsistent with ourselves if we said again he is spirit also. Man consists not *only* of matter, or *only* of spirit, but of both combined in one person, or he would not be man. In the conjunction of both consists his manhood. So Baptism is composed not *only* of a sign, or only of the grace signified, but of both combined in one ordinance, or it would not be a sacrament. In the conjunction of both consists its sacramentality. I contend, indeed, that the Twenty-seventh Article itself, according to the accepted language of theologians, declares of Baptism that it is not only a sign, but also a means whereby the thing signified is received. Any other construction is reduced to take the "*signa*" of the Article to the prejudice of the "*efficacia*," and to pass by the "*tantum instrumentum*" altogether. Baptism, says the Article, is a sign, not barren but efficacious, nor only a sign, but also an instrument of grace. But suppose we admit that this is not the necessary interpretation of the Articles, do these Articles therefore deny other statements of the Prayer Book, where, without question, this *is* the interpretation? The Articles at least speak the same truth as the Catechism to a certain extent, though, according to you, not to the same extent. But can we convict the Church of self-contradiction, because in the Catechism she enlarges the scope of, and completes, her definition? The Bishop, then, in believing the statements of the Catechism and the Baptismal Services, certainly embraces the Articles. But you persist in imposing upon the latter a meaning absolutely inconsistent with the former, and in believing the Articles rejecting the Catechism and Services. In holding that Baptism is a sign, we hold more, that it is also a sacrament, which you admit the Church does somewhere maintain it to be. But you insist that in pronouncing it to be a sign, the Church means a sign only, and refuse to believe her when she unequivocally declares it to be a sacrament containing an inward spiritual grace also, both of which are accurately consistent with each other.

The other of your instances admits of as easy a solution. The only contradiction to this proposition, that sacraments have a wholesome effect only on worthy recipients, is this, that sacraments have a wholesome effect on unworthy recipients. But this the Church no where asserts. She positively takes account of the recipient's qualification, and even in the *Service for the Baptism of adults* inserts "coming to Him by faith." If your instance is taken from the case of infants, certainly, in their case, no place is given for these qualifications, simply because they are impossible. Infants are regenerated by Baptism, without repentance and without faith, because they are incapable of repenting or of believing. But this involves no contradiction of the other formula, that only worthy recipients receive the benefit of Baptism. Just as if we should say, the redemption wrought by Christ benefits none but the penitent and the faithful, we should not thereby deny its efficacy to infants, who cannot repent or believe. I should think it no violation of consistency, yet perfectly parallel with this, to say none are saved but the penitent, and yet again, infants who cannot repent are capable of salvation.

The concession of so small a modicum of the Prayer Book to the Bishop of Exeter, that is, the imputation on him of disagreement with the great bulk of it, to say the least, partakes of great recklessness of assertion, and is purely a begging of the question. What show of candour there can be in such an imputation, flung by one who *confesses* to a rejection of parts of the Prayer Book on one who professes to receive the whole of it, I scarcely need inquire. It is as little agreeable to fact to oppose the Metropolitan's private judgment to the Bishop's. To take the Metropolitan's own enunciation of his opinions, is to perceive that they are fundamentally accordant; whilst that very system which you oppose to the Bishop's in pretence to Prayer Book sanction, and which furnishes the only "natural" interpretation of the Church's statements, the Archbishop denounces as "subtleties which were never allowed to be introduced into her intelligible and rational formularies," adding, "Therefore,"

(*because* the church is not Calvinistic,) “*Therefore* we are instructed to declare that those who are devoted to Christ as infants by Baptism are regenerate.” As he again declares, “How is this fact of regeneracy, on which no less than eternity depends, to be discovered? . . . The hearers appeal to the Church, an authorised interpreter of scripture. The Church acquaints them that they were themselves regenerated and made the children of grace by the benefit of Baptism.”\* And he actually condemns the system of Calvin, especially for doing just what it does in your own case—for denying the grace of Baptism.

Your readers, therefore, need to be informed what those views of His Grace are, which are so admirably expressed by the Articles; and what those peculiarities of the Bishop of Exeter, which their natural sense so entirely demolishes. At present they appear to be, both the views of the one and the peculiarities of the other, the same, viz., baptismal grace and anti-Calvinism. As to the similarity between the Bishop’s views now and Mr. Newman’s when writing Tract 90, I may say that I have before me at the present moment a Charge of the former great writer’s, refuting and very severely characterising the peculiarities of that Tract, but in which, with great perspicuity and beauty, are expressed the very same views on the doctrine of sacraments which the Bishop *now* entertains. When you refer, however, to “*peculiar views* of sacramental grace,” I must remind you that between you and the maintainers of Baptismal Regeneration, the question is not about *peculiar views* of sacramental grace, but absolutely on its existence. If grace be assigned to Baptism at all, there is no question *what* grace to assign to it, but only on the mode of its concernment with that grace; and we may ask in passing, if Mr. Newman found it necessary to avow a non-natural sense in order to reconcile his “*peculiar views* of sacramental grace” with the Prayer Book, what unheard of device must they have resort to, who in the face of the Prayer Book deny sacramental grace altogether? It is as well to note,

\* “Apostolical Preaching Considered.” The edition of 1850, quoted by the Bishop of Exeter, in his letter to the Archbishop.



too, that those views referred to the second, and had nothing to do with the primal sacrament. They were on the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist exclusively.

I have thus briefly commented on your preliminary allegations, as I am anxious to arrive at the main object of this address. That object is more immediately, to make appear so transparent an inconsistency between your statements and the Prayer Book—in the former, so positive a denial of the plainest and *unquestioned* dicta of the latter, as to wholly invalidate, by this one consideration, your very first claim to a contest with the Bishop of Exeter on the subject of this letter.

You thus sum up its main positions.

“There are FOUR distinct scriptural meanings of the word “*Baptism*.”

“1. Suffering.

“2. Endowment with the miraculous gifts of the Holy “Ghost.

“3. Conversion or regeneration, or renewal of soul; or, as “St. Peter calls it, ‘the answer of a good conscience towards “God.’ In none of these is there any mention of water.

“4. An application of water to the body, in the name of “the Lord, and in obedience to the commandment of the Lord; “or, as St. Peter calls it, ‘the putting away of the filth of the “flesh.’” (Letter, p. 19.)

Your allusion to the first and second senses in which the word is used, *I* shall be permitted to dismiss, as on these no difference can exist affecting the question at issue. That question relates to *that* Baptism of which our 27th article speaks, as one of the “two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel,” and to which particularly, though we must be careful not to apply language which refers to other baptisms, we are anxious to learn an exclusive meaning we are to apply. The third use as clearly, you do not intend to comprise this Baptism, which is the Church's sacrament, for it is one of those in which no mention of water is made, and it is clear the *sacrament* cannot be

defined without such mention. The fourth, therefore, expresses the character of the ordinance, whose nature and properties are in dispute. Let us repeat it.

“An application of water to the body in the name of the Lord.” “The washing away of the filth of the flesh.” Previously, in like manner, you define it, “an outward and visible ordinance of revealed religion, in which, by divine commandment, *water* is applied to the human body.” (p. 15.)

Now these words, we must recollect, are intended for a full description of the sacrament, not a partial one, embracing, as in common parlance, the visible condition, which may be taken to specially characterise an ordinance as enshrined in a visible rite before men, but for an entire characterisation of the sacrament, to the elision of all inward process or embodied gift. This is apparent, in that for the only thing which can be assigned to Baptism, *over and beyond* the “outward and visible ordinance”—the “application of water to the body,” you invent another subject, and mark it as constituting a process “altogether distinct” from the sacrament, and contrasted with it. In short, then, Baptism, in that sense of the word which expresses a sacrament of the church, is nothing but “an application of water to the body,” “the putting away of the filth of the flesh.”

This, then, is the shrivelled and vapid theory on whose side you tell us (p. 5) is “clearly and powerfully” arrayed the “great bulk of the Prayer Book;” and with *this* theory, that to make the whole Prayer Book fully harmonious and consistent, the “erasure of three or four sentences would be abundantly sufficient”!

Marvel of obtuseness! Provokingness of obstinacy! Very ludicrousness and recklessness of assurance! How shall I proceed to demonstrate its baselessness, when every step in my progress must be almost an implication of the entire want of the bluntest powers of discernment on the part of my readers!

I said that the third sense which you mention as belonging to the word Baptism, viz., conversion or regeneration, could not be meant to refer to the Church’s sacrament, because it



elided all "mention of water," and water is certainly an integral of Christian Baptism. But do you not perceive that neither should the fourth description be taken to define the Church's sacrament, for it equally elides all mention of grace, which you know is, according to the Prayer Book, just as much an integral of the ordinance? How, therefore, can your divided definition—a thing of "shreds and patches"—comprise that which consists not *only* of an inward grace, nor *only* of an outward element, but of both, consentaneously inherent, a sign, *and* the thing signified, whose conjunction is necessary to make up a sacrament?

Let us revert for one moment to the *dogmatic* definition of the Church.

*Question.* What meanest thou by this word sacrament?

*Answer.* I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same.

*Q.* How many parts are there in a sacrament?

*A.* Two; the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace."

Here, then, is laid down what is the normal characteristic of a sacrament. That characteristic which marks its being as a sacrament in contrariety to a mere sign—which is inalienable—of its essence—without which no ordinance *is* a sacrament. That characteristic is the conjunction of two parts, an outward and an inward, in its being not only a sign, but the means of conveying that grace which it signifies; as the Catechism phrases it, "whereby we receive the same." So that it is just as vain to think of characterising Baptism by saying it is the grace only, which it signifies, as to say it is the water only which does signify. The *truth* of the sacrament consists, according to the Church, in its being both, in actually containing as part of it, as much part of it as the outward rite of cleansing, the inward grace; in being not only a mode of exhibition, but also an instrument of conveyance. This truth of a sacrament is of course presented to us in both the ordinances to which we peculiarly give the name. The blessed

bread and wine not only signify the holy Body and Blood, but are their means of conveyance to the faithful, who, there and then partaking of the sign, verily and indeed receive the "Thing signified." The Articles convey, in innumerable passages, the same truth, the same witness of the necessary presence in sacraments of something besides the outward elements, in order to constitute them sacraments, in which consists their sacramentality. By them God doth not only by the visible ordinance show his work, but "work *invisibly* in us." (Art. 25.) They do not only put away the filth of the flesh, in the one, or only strengthen the bodily frame, as in the other; but have independently "a wholesome effect and operation on all who rightly receive them," (25;) they have an "effect," contain the "grace of God's gifts," which the unworthiness of the minister cannot diminish or take away, (26;) the faithful receiver of one of them is thereby partaker of Christ, and His body is "given" and "taken" thereby. (28.) To separate these two parts "overthroweth the nature of a sacrament." This Transubstantiation does, by taking away the "sign" from the Lord's supper; and equally is it done if we take away the thing signified from Baptism.

Did it need, then, this simple explication to prepare us for enquiring whether your definition really expresses the Church's sacrament? Nay, if this be a sacrament, if this be Baptism, I ask, Where is its *inward* grace? Where is the thing signified? Where is the Baptism of the Articles, of the Catechism, in your theory? *Where is God's sacrament?* You have swept it away with the besom of a destructive theory. You have denuded the casket, in which God laid up a treasure, of the treasure; you take away the thing signified, and for a sacrament leave us a part of it, a naked sign—a Jewish shadow for the substance of the new dispensation—that which should be a characteristic of Christianity without its mark of distinction—semblances, pieces of dramatic acting, "lack-lustre," eyeless phantoms, for those living realities, "full of eyes round about," gleaming with the sevenfold Spirit of God, for those blessed ordinances in which the wondrous Incarnation is

mysteriously extended through the mystic body of the Lord. And your wish is to drag Holy Church into partnership in the crime.

I plainly ask, Does your No. 4 definition express any thing more than a sign? Did not Bishop Jewel point at your process of mutilation, when he uttered the unmeasured *dictum* before quoted? It would not be without satisfaction to some, that you should throw your thoughts once more into this channel, and present the world with your definition of a sacrament. For certainly by the Church's definition, which, be it ever understood, you are bound to, and have accepted as your own, your theory denies the sacramentality of Baptism.

It is abundantly manifest, then, that your classification does not embrace the Church's sacrament at all, and that therefore all the arguments which you found upon that classification are simply *nihil ad rem*. It appears to me in addition to be an attempt to destroy all possibility of definitive accuracy in the use of the term; to conjure up the forms of a thousand and one different theories, that we may be able to scan the proportions of none; to suggest a multiplicity of senses, that we may be unable to fix a meaning at all; and to raise a smoke, that the jingling hypotheses of mere theorists should escape detection in obscurity, and conviction of their error in the common uncertainty of truth.

It is thus that, defining Baptism, the church's sacrament, by that which is only a part of it, "the application of water to the body," you triumphantly conclude of the Apostles' language, when in various places they associate with the mention of Baptism the bestowal and operation of spiritual gifts and effects, that they cannot be referring to the Church's sacrament. Taking for granted, preliminarily, I say, that the Church's sacrament is only an "outward and visible ordinance." The question is not, however, between two baptisms, an outward and an inward, to which does the Apostles' language apply; for, admitting the duality of baptism, there can be no doubt; but, *that* Baptism,—the Church's ordinance,—does it comprise both the outward and the inward part in itself? for if it do, the Apostle's language may certainly be, and certainly is,



spoken of it. And then indeed, in passing, we may remark, we shall not be forced into an artificial mode of accounting for his using, to express a spiritual process, a term that refers to a mere outward ordinance. If you assume of the Church's Baptism, that it is nothing more than an outward ordinance, you may contend that we mistake it for what you call the inward baptism, when we ascribe to it the Apostles' language concerning the gifts of grace. But the Church's position is precisely that which you overlook, viz.: Baptism composed of both an outward part and an inward, the sign and the thing signified, in one ordinance. To Baptism, as a sign disjoined from its thing signified, one of its constituent parts, the Apostles' language does not apply. But to Baptism, as composed of two parts, the Church believes that it does apply.

We, accordingly, who do not see it necessary to set the Church and the Scriptures in competition, as you appear to do, (p. 19,) but consider the one agreeable to the other, deny that the Scriptures ever restrict christian Baptism to the signification of an outward rite, and contend that where they associate Baptism and spiritual effects together, they allude to that ordinance of Christianity where outward form and inward grace are combined. But you, assuming that the Bishop means a mere outward rite by Baptism, answer the question, Does Baptism confer regeneration? by adducing scripture to prove that where the inspired writers ascribe spiritual effects to what they call baptism, they do not speak of an outward ordinance only, and consequently not to the subject of the Bishop's question. It is thus that you speak of the distinction drawn by St. Peter. Assuming that there are two baptisms, one of which is the Church's sacrament, you make the Apostle to draw a distinction between the two, and deny of the latter that it saves. On the contrary, he speaks of but one Baptism, and the distinction he draws is between *that* Baptism in its integrity, and baptism considered only as a "putting away of the filth of the flesh." He merely denies of a part, that which belongs to the whole. He says of the *outward part* of Baptism, that it does not save. He says of Baptism, "It doth save." So says the Bishop.

“Baptism doth save.” A mere putting away of the filth of the flesh? No. Baptism which is the Church’s sacrament, composed of inward grace as well as outward sign. Why then employ so much illustration and acumen to prove that the application of water to the flesh cannot save? You have raised, Sir, an antagonist of straw, and put in his mouth statements of your own imagination, and then, confounding both him and his doctrines, which in sooth there is nothing easier than to do, pass before your readers in the spoils of victory, as if they were won from the Bishop; going off in the conclusion, with all that appearance of success, as though the latter were left dead upon the field. Whose is the doctrine of “regeneration by the outward ordinance, and remission of sins by the outward ordinance”? The imaginary antagonist’s aforesaid, certainly not the Bishop’s. Nay, you may resolve Baptism into its constituent parts, and deny of each separated what belongs to both joined, as long as it may please, though to no purpose, and to little credit. But you have no right to make it in this mangled form the subject of our predicate, which is meant to apply to one Baptism only, the Church’s primal sacrament, which has its origin from the Lord’s sacred Side, and its ineffable dignity as a channel from His Humanity to man.

You may assign an arbitrary meaning to Baptism, and declare of such Baptism, that it does not save. St. Peter gives you no precedent for such a caprice. To use the quoted passage of his Epistle to declare that an outward ordinance cannot save, is perfectly legitimate, and accordant with his sense. The only perverse and heretical use that can be made of it, were to prove that Baptism does not save. *To this use your theory does deprave the passage.* You degrade the Church’s sacrament into a mere material washing, and apply what the passage denies of this, to the sacrament itself. But Baptism *doth* save. As the instrument of God’s grace, it cannot fail to save. That is, where it is unable to save, is just where God’s grace is unable. Baptism, in itself, cannot fail; the failure, if it be, is in man. Just as God’s grace



cannot fail. The failure, if it be, is in man. Of Baptism, indeed, we cannot say it saves the unfit, neither can we say so of God's grace. But we have no occasion to find a new definition of God's grace, to suit particular cases, where not even grace can save. Neither of Baptism, to suit particular cases, where not even Baptism as the instrument of grace can save. Of both, in the abstract, it is declared, they save. To disparage them, because in certain instances they do not save certain subjects, is something like the logicians' sophism, "*A dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter.*" When, therefore, the Bishop of Exeter propounds the question you attribute to him, "Do you hold that all baptised persons are regenerate?" there is no question to what Baptism he refers. Splitting the sacrament's two parts into two baptisms, you indeed may well ask him, when he speaks of the sacrament itself, which he means. Whereas the fact is he means *neither*, for he means both. And meaning both in one ordinance, your distinction, drawn from a division of it into two, is a nullity.

The scope of your argument is wide of the question; the shaft of your logic wings by the mark, and, barbed at best with a truism, makes but a feeble noise as it descends.

I must just put together a few expressions in which you extend your description of the sacrament, compiled from your book as well as this letter, and pass on. .

"That ordinance in which we have expressed and proclaimed our conversion." (The Church and the Churches, 2nd Ed., p. 384.) "Water authenticating and ratifying a change previously effected by faith.—(Ibid., page 387.)—When "complete," "a sign of a change of character—of a spiritual cleansing already undergone, and to persons so changed a seal of God's promises to his people." "To every one entitled to the promises, actually and visibly sealing them." (Ibid., page 390.) "An application of water to the body—a putting away of the filth of the flesh." (Letter, p. 19, *et passim.*) There is no difficulty, therefore, in stating your's and the Prayer Book's theories. They stand out in

bold relief. Absolutely contradictory. Utterly, by any figure, or by any qualification, or by any hypothesis, irreconcilable with each other. One is, that Baptism is a sacrament; the other, that it is a sign only. The one, that it is an outward ordinance containing invisible grace; the other, that it is an outward ordinance containing no grace whatever:—water washing the body—putting away the filth of the flesh—professing and proclaiming—signifying not a gift from God therein conveyed, but a quality in *man* thereto brought—declaring not what is coming from above, from the Fountain of Life, but what may be brought to it from below by the recipient of life, having all its worth, and dignity, and even signification, in reference to man only.

I shall now, however, bring forward your book to develop a further view of this sacrament, whose reach of fancy and grotesqueness of invention blushes into shade the other coruscation of your theory. The denial that Baptism is a sacrament, that is, that it is composed of more than an outward ordinance, is intelligible, and involves at least no inconsistency with itself. The theory is not unknown in the Christian world. It numbers Socinus among its original and chief adherents. Luther called it the production of “fanatic spirits, who depreciate the majesty of Baptism, and speak wickedly thereof.” Bishop Jewel: “blasphemy.” But you have joined with it a specification which perpetrates the Horatian monstrosity with a vengeance, and a melancholy attempt at compromise ruins even the uniformity of your scheme. To employ the allusion of an elegant writer, you do not even consult the propriety of a bad theory. It has appeared that that theory eliminates the inward part of Baptism, and makes it to consist of the outward ordinance only. Yet possibly attracted or alarmed by the positive definition of the Catechism, that Baptism comprehends two parts, you could not rest contented till, out of your bald and emaciated construction, you had devised something to correspond with the Church’s completed fabric. *You* must have a second part, and what could it be but the recipient’s qualification? Denying that the sacrament conveys

grace, yet willing to believe that it is composed of two parts, you make a quality residing in the mind of man an objective part of an external ordinance, and become at the same time a degrader of the sacrament into a sign, and a transformer of your theory into nonsense. What Burke calls a needless waste of evils. For there was scarcely a necessity for the double sacrifice of your orthodoxy and your logic. The latter might, at least, have been spared. Yet the falsity of the one entails a common fatality, and "no meaning" and heterodoxy struggle for pre-eminence. Error, perhaps, can never produce consistence. It is the property of truth alone to be uniform.

"The Apostle speaks of Baptism as a compound, including "two things, the outward visible ordinance and the inward "spiritual faith." ("The Church," &c., p. 386.) "Not merely "and simply the outward ordinance in water, but unitedly the "outward ordinance and the inward and true faith. This is "that one Baptism which we acknowledge for the remission of "sins." (p. 387.) "Baptism doth save: but what Baptism? "The whole of it, including also the state of heart which sup-  
plies an answer of a good conscience."

These, then, are the two component parts of Baptism—the outward ordinance, and the inward faith—the application of water to the flesh, and a certain state of heart in the person who comes to be baptised! Man's faith a part of God's sacrament! An internal quality of the recipient a component of that external which he presents himself to receive! Let us throw your theory, as far as we have gathered it, into a catechism.

*Question.* What meanest thou by this word sacrament?

*Answer.* I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual quality in the mind of the recipient of the sacrament, ordained by Christ himself as a proclamation and pledge to assure the world thereof.

*Q.* How many parts are there in a sacrament? *A.* Two: the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual faith of the recipient.

*Q.* What is the inward part or thing in Baptism? *A.* Its



recipient's faith. For being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, we have been hereby (by faith) made the children of grace.

Q. What is required of persons to be baptised? A. That they possess that (faith) which is the inward part of Baptism.

Here is a farrago of contradiction, yet an unadorned expression of your system.

1. That which is a necessary *pre*-requisite to the worthy reception of Baptism is a part of the Baptism *subsequently* received. 2. A disposition of the recipient's mind is a component of an external rite. 3. The gift is the qualification, and the qualification is the gift. Faith, and the state of heart which supplies the answer of a good conscience, are, you are aware, the necessary qualifications in an adult for rightly receiving Baptism. Do you not call to mind, then, those definitions of the Catechism in which the Church distinguishes between the qualifications and the inward part of the sacrament? The grace, which is the inward part or thing signified in Baptism, she defines, before the qualification enters into her consideration at all. "What is the inward spiritual grace of Baptism?" she asks; and having answered "a new birth," she *then* asks, "What is required of persons to be baptised? Repentance and faith." And in this she follows the true process of salvation; as thus: there are two parties concerned about Baptism — God and man, the Giver and the receiver. The truths relating to the Giver may be first laid down, then the truths relating to the receiver. What of the Giver in Baptism? Water, and a form of words, His appointment; regeneration, His gift conveyed. What of the receiver who comes to Baptism? Repentance and faith. What is the one? The gift promised by the Giver to the qualified (adult, and therefore the impossible to be unqualified infant), in and through Baptism. What is the other? The qualification to fit the receiver for the gift promised in and through Baptism. This is simple and consecutive. But you confound the two. Nay, you place the whole work of Baptism, except the application of an outward element and form, in the recipient!

You take it, as to any inward property or attribute, out of the Giver's hands. You banish the All-powerful from His sacrament! What you make the inward part of Baptism, by a misapprehension, belonging to your religious system, of the true nature of the gifts of grace, the Church asserts to be the qualification for receiving that inward part, itself the real gift, consisting of somewhat far transcending the qualification required, somewhat having its origin not in the mind of man, but in the eternal fecundity of Christ's quickening Humanity.

What, then, must be the miserable confusion reigning in that mind, which can enact the unmeaningness of making an ordinance wholly independent on and out of ourselves, actually composed of a thing actually existing within ourselves? Making a quality, having its abode in the mind of the recipient, and having taken it at some long or short or unknown period before, a part of that very objective sacrament which, by His minister, God applies and bestows at the "fountain of our regeneration."\*

Am I approaching the language of scorn—I assure you, I am entirely innocent of the feeling—in remarking that any child, of the fourth form of a Sunday School, would know better than this? What! would it tell us man's faith was the inward part of God's sacrament. Would it tell us, the quality "required of them that come to be baptised" is the inward grace of Baptism? I know not, indeed, whether such a child could be found, to perpetrate so gross an absurdity, but I know that not the dullest master in the realm would be found to pass by the perpetrator without "a rap on the knuckles" for its ignorance.

An inquiry, however, at this stage, into the source of the confusion of the mental vision which can alone produce such monsters of speculation as this, will enable us, as we go on, to track the further progress of your theory, and serve as a digest of the subject.

The whole process of your argument is a misapprehension of the real conditions of the question in dispute. And that

\* The Homily of repairing and keeping clean of Churches.



misapprehension again is traceable to a subtle spirit, which marks the anti-Christian tendency of modern Evangelicalism.

The question at issue is, Baptism in the abstract, Baptism *simpliciter*, as a sacrament considered in its objective character as a part of the divine economy, as it represents those realities which, irrespective of our reception, must exist as objects whereon faith depends. Baptism as an instrument, concerned with a gift, in the hands of God the giver. Of this Baptism the question is, Does it convey regeneration? Is regeneration its inward part? Is the thing signified out of it, or in it, and communicated by it? Is it, in short, a sacrament? Now into this question you introduce a wholly foreign element. You mix it up with a consideration of the qualities in the receiver, which are irrelevant, which have nothing whatever to do with that for which we are on the search, viz., that which is of the essence of the sacrament, which constitutes the being and the *truth* of a sacrament. You deal, in fact, with the mere subjective relation, when the objective reality is in dispute. Suppose a candidate comes to the font. His character is ascertained. His qualifications have been accounted of. The preparatives concerned with due reception prescribed and cared for. Let us dismiss them. He is coming to receive an objective ordinance, to be the subject of an external work, to undergo an outward application. What is it he there and then receives? You talk to me of "worthiness," and "faith," and "conversion." Nay, you will see that the Church has taken due precaution for these before the font is approached. Do not revert to the subject from the object I place before you. Turn your eyes to the white-robed priest, and to the limpid wave, and to what these things signify. What does he present himself there and then to receive? You talk about "discrimination," about discriminating as to what sense we use the word Baptism in. What! are we not at the font? Is not that *water* we see before us? Is not the Church praying, "Sanctify this water"? Does she not quote that "commandment of the Lord," which you tell us marks the use of the term in one sense, the Christian sacrament? Well, then, our question is concerning Baptism,

the Christian sacrament ; what is the intent of its application ? What is to be done by it ? What is the effect and operation it is appointed and purposed to perform ? But mark your fallacy. You mix up this question concerning Baptism, considered in itself, essentially, with Baptism in its administration, with the dispositions of its recipients ; and because an uncertainty hangs around the latter, because of the existence of qualifications in man, his fallible brethren cannot speak with confidence, or dogmatise with precision, you would insinuate an uncertainty as to the nature of Baptism itself ; the doubt attaching to the former you would fling around the latter ; alter the meaning of Baptism to suit hypothetical cases : talk of “ distinction,” “ discrimination,” and so forth ! It is you, however, that fail to discriminate. You fail to discriminate between the question concerning normal and formal Baptism, and concerning the particular cases of its administration ; concerning the proper effect of the sacrament, and the qualification to receive that proper effect.

Now, if Baptism be inquired of not in itself, but as to its effects in particular persons, of course we must discriminate between the character of the persons, (not as to the uses of the term Baptism, — Baptism is but one, — but as to) the fitness or the unfitness of the candidate for its application. This, however, has nothing whatever to do with Baptism in the abstract, For, affirming that Baptism benefits not the unfit, takes not the benefit of Baptism away. To declare that the unworthy recipient of a sacrament receives not the gift of the sacrament, is not a denial of the gift. Nay, to assign personal unworthiness as a reason for not receiving the gift, is tantamount with saying that the gift *was* there to be received. The heresy of the day, however, consists in denying the gift of sacraments. Not in saying worthiness is necessary to receive it, but that there is none to receive. Not in affirming that only in those who worthily partake, have sacraments a wholesome effect or operation, but in absolutely denying this wholesome effect or operation. Now it is the denial of the gift of Baptism in the abstract, that suggests the use of your dis-

criminating difference, and therefore you distort the Bishops' question from its *abstract* signification, into reference to recipients who may not be fit to receive, and by that means illegitimately foist in your idea of modification. All the grace with which you admit Baptism to be in any way connected, is not as residing within it, having therefore a real and objective connection, but as residing in man who comes to it, having an accidental and possibly subjective connection. Therefore you say, to ask of Baptism whether it is connected with inward grace, we must discriminate as to the character and disposition of the receivers. Baptism may sometimes be connected with regeneration, that is, when a person already regenerated is baptised. And, therefore, the justness of connecting grace with Baptism depends on the state of the person with whom we connect it. It is clear, however, when you say of a baptised person that he is regenerated, you do not mean regenerated by Baptism, but that, having been regenerated, he receives the Church's sacrament of Baptism, and is then a baptised person regenerated. But could we ever impute to you the gross and abhorrent absurdity that Baptism *destroyed* regeneration? Of course it is self-evident that if a baptised person come to Baptism regenerated, he is a baptised person regenerated; and this is all you will admit. But the question is as to the time and the manner of regeneration.

Failing to consider of regeneration as a gift from God, but understanding it to mean a process in man's own mind merely, you suppose the Bishop and the Church, when they declare that an outward ordinance and an inward grace are necessarily conjoined to make up the Church's sacrament, to mean that to whomsoever that outward ordinance is applied, he receives the spiritual benefit intended to be conveyed? The simple question being, is Baptism in its outward form a sign of somewhat out of it, or of a grace which it conveys? that is, is it an ordinance in its normal character consisting of an outward part only, but possible to be used as a sign of the subjective possession of grace, or is it in its normal character



an ordinance actually consisting of both outward part and inward, and by its constitution appointed to be a sign of an inherent existence of grace? And in this, let me again remind you, consists what the Church defines to be its sacramentality. Its sacramentality consists in its objective connection with grace, in that grace being, as the Homily has it, "annexed" to the "visible sign." In its possessing an inward part independent on man's reception, so that, discarding all idea of the latter, Baptism has yet an existence in its integrity, whole, perfect, and divine. But in your theory, baptism, as unconnected with its receiver, as simply an instrument in the hands of God, is but a washing with water, an outward application to the body. You cannot associate with it any spiritual grace, except as man furnishes it. You give it all its meaning and truth as derived from man's adoption, not from God's employment, as a badge assumed by man whose faith has already accomplished everything, not an instrument of God through which to accomplish that which man's faith, or anything of man's, is unable to do. Looking into the conditions of man's being and the congruity of his disposition, and not into the depths of the eternal storehouse, for all its pregnant worth and signification. And this it is which betrays you into that unnatural idea, that man's faith is the inward part of Baptism—that the qualification pre-requisite for rightly receiving Baptism is the "thing signified," and inward part of the Baptism received! Just as if we should say of the Lord's Supper, that the conditions of a beneficial partaking, viz., repentance, charity, and faith, were the thing signified by the bread and wine, and the inward part of that sacrament.

The Church, however, duly discriminating (not between two different baptisms, but) between the giver and the receiver, and therefore between the gift and the qualification, takes due account of faith, and yet does not include it in her definition of Baptism; speaks of Baptism as still composed of two parts, over and beyond this, beyond man's qualification, or man's desert, or man's co-operation. She sees in it an instrument of God, and man its passive subject. She views it as stand-

ing between heaven and earth, in its own inherent majesty, rich with countless blessings, deriving from the former its whole impulse, complete within itself before touching the latter, bearing a chain from the throne of God, to bind both in one in the Body of the Risen Head, ("through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,") to which, as an objective part of the Divine economy, no worth of man can add dignity, no co-operation lend force; in which Christ has set up His seat, from whence to dispense richest gifts, and man lies at His footstool counting his faith weakness, and his repentance vain, unless while acknowledging Divine Power and Grace, Omnipotent and Supreme.

The evangelical theory is continually rooting among the imperfect desires, the fitful flashes, the feeble aspirations, in the still corrupt heart of man, when it should be gazing upwards into the third heaven for the Spirit descending, and the dew poured out, and the gifts brought down, and the consecrating grace to convert the former hold of Satan into a temple of the Living God, and the Celestial Inhabitant taking up his abode therein. On the contrary, whatever be the fervency of repentance, whatever the purpose of amendment, whatever the strength of resolution, whatever the steadfastness of faith, they must not be confounded with that gift which, on our repentance, and resolution, and faith, God promises through Baptism to bestow. Faith, indeed, we are told is the reaching out of the hand. How self-deceiving, then, to confound the reaching out of the hand with the gift bestowed! It is the opening wide of the mouth. How delusive to confound the opening wide of the mouth with that abounding fulness wherewith God shall fill it! "Some persons," says Luther, the great champion of faith, "preach and magnify Baptism, but yet err in that they rest it not on God's command and institution, but on some human work, on our faith and dignity, as if it were not enough that God should have appointed and commanded it, but it must first be confirmed by us; and *as though Baptism had no existence or no efficacy without the accession of our faith.* To this I make objection and say,



*Whatever be my faith, firm or weak, present or absent, this neither adds anything to Baptism nor takes anything away.*\* Did he mean, therefore, that without faith man could receive the benefit of Baptism? No; he spoke of Baptism in the abstract. And thus speaking, he declares that, independently on man's faith, Baptism has a fixed existence, composed of grace and sign, an unalterable branch of the divine economy.

It is from this failure to perceive that the question at issue is the objective character of Baptism, and that the modern theory is not simply or chiefly a denial of the effect of Baptism in its administration to certain persons, but a denial absolutely of the effect itself; not that its gift is withholden from certain candidates, but that it has no gift to bestow; that the famous hypothetical interpretation, of which we have heard and read so much, has been adduced as its vindication and apology. I am not going to vainly endeavour to add one drop to the "cataract" of demonstration by which this plea has been exposed, but to view it for a moment on a side which is not so commonly taken notice of. "The hypothetical interpretation," I contend, takes for granted, as the first principle of its application, the truth which the modern imputed heresy is counted heresy for denying, and by which you excuse your interpretation of some of those "*few sentences*" (!) in the Prayer Book which you admit to be "clearly on the side of the Bishop of Exeter's private judgment." The hypothetical interpretation takes for its groundwork that regeneration is the appropriate gift of Baptism; that Baptism is instituted to convey regeneration; that this is its very use in God's economy, but that from certain impediments supposed to exist on the part of the recipient, some recipients are debarred from the gift, and therefore of course Baptism has not conveyed it; and of consequence the asseveration that in such cases it has not conveyed it, is no greater disparagement of Baptism than it is of God's grace—it merely

\* *Homilia de Baptismo*, vol. 7, p. 351. Wittenburg, 1558, quoted by Arch-deacon Wilberforce, in "*Doctrine of Holy Baptism*."

denies of the one what it denies of the other. Baptism does not regenerate those who are incapable of regeneration ; but your dogma, so far from adducing the presence of those impediments in the receiver, as a reason for denying that Baptism regenerates, which would be true only of particular cases, denies it because it can be true in none, because Baptism is not appointed as the mean of regenerating grace. The hypothetical interpretation is, that the Church supposes such and such qualified for Baptism, and therefore speaks as though they receive the benefit of Baptism, regeneration. Your dogma is that regeneration is not the benefit of Baptism. The hypothetical interpretation is, that the Church, taking for granted the fitness of the recipient for Baptism, takes for granted, *as a consequence*, the communication of the gift through Baptism. Your dogma is, that, taking for granted such fitness, it follows, as a consequence, that the gift is not communicated through Baptism. The hypothetical interpretation is, that if the gift of regeneration be not received through Baptism, it is by the incapacity of the receiver. Your dogma, that it is from the incapacity of the ordinance in itself. The hypothetical interpretation would impugn the certainty of the fact of regeneration following through Baptism, by the uncertainty as to the fact of the qualification preceding, and, therefore, means that if we could be certain as to the one, we should be certain as to the other ; but, in your theory, the certainty of the qualification having preceded, leaves it as certain as ever, that regeneration through Baptism does not and cannot follow. The hypothetical interpretation used in the case of Baptism to infants argues thus ; as in the service for baptising adults, it is supposed, that the recipient is fully qualified, and though that cannot be certainly known by the fallible administrator, yet the Church bids him to speak in the language of certainty, as to his having been regenerated by Baptism ; therefore the language of certainty in the service for infants, may consist, with a like doubt as to their qualification ; but your dogma is, that Baptism regenerates no one, and that therefore the supposition of the qualifica-

tion in the recipient can be no reason for assigning the gift of regeneration to Baptism. In short, to use my former words, the hypothetical interpretation, looking into the recipient's state for a reason that Baptism does not regenerate, implies that regeneration is the gift of Baptism; and if we ask when and why does Baptism not regenerate, answers, only in certain instances, and because the candidate does not possess the qualification; but your theory, looking into the constitution itself of Baptism, for a reason that it does not regenerate, implies that regeneration is not the gift of baptism, and if we ask, when and why does Baptism not regenerate, answers, not in any instance, and because it does not convey regeneration.

The possible existence of secret decrees is alleged by the party that symbolises with yourself on the doctrines of Calvin, as a reason for refusing to believe of all infants apparently baptised that they are regenerated. But the question as to all infants apparently baptised, whether they are regenerated, and that as to Baptism's being the instrument of regeneration, are entirely distinct, and not till you have admitted the second, is there any meaning in your arguing the first. For if the second be false, (and such is your theory,) no supposition of a secret decree is necessary or admissible to disprove the position of the first. If you refuse to say of any infants, that Baptism has regenerated them, simply because this is not its office, what motive is there in going elsewhere for a reason for your refusing to say it of all, because a secret decree may in some cases prevent it? This is devising a partial reason for denying in particulars what you deny universally. Admitting that the language of the Church can be held to consist with the notion, that, owing to a secret decree of God, the effect of Baptism may in many cases be withheld from infants ostensibly baptised, this does not warrant the assumption that the effect does not belong to Baptism. The argument against the universality of regeneration touches not the question as to regeneration, when received, being received through Baptism. If true, it only proves these two things: 1st. That God's grace is not given to all. And



2nd. That it is possible for "water to be applied to the body," when the spiritual benefit is debarred from following. The first of which, it is nothing to the purpose to disprove; and the second, as equally beside the question, may be freely admitted.

It appears, then, in passing, that if we should even give up the Seventeenth Article to your Calvinistic interpretation, you could not establish in it any inconsistency with the objective sacramentality of Baptism.

No. The denial of baptismal grace has still only left for its support that wretched theory which merges the gift in the qualification, which asserts that "baptism has no existence or no efficacy without the accession of man's faith."

But again, the same theory compels you into the further incongruity of drawing a distinction, between baptism in the case of infants, and baptism in the case of adults. It is needless to say that, in inquiry concerning the essence of Baptism, whatsoever we find to belong to Baptism in the abstract, cannot be separated from it, by the mere circumstances of its application. Baptism *simpliciter* is not affected by the consideration of the age of its recipients; and it is clear, that we have not ascertained what that is which constitutes essential Baptism, if we are still puzzled as to what to assign to it in the case of its administration to infants. Yet here, at the close of your enquiry,—an enquiry we were to suppose concerned with the question now agitating the Church, that is, into the essence and constitution of Christian Baptism,—we are met with a declaration, that you "have said nothing about the baptism of infants." Why, then, you might just as well have said nothing at all. I shall contend, however, that you have said a great deal about the Baptism of infants, for that you have denied of Baptism, Baptism itself, the Church's sacrament—that it is more than an outward ordinance (pp. 15, 19, and "The Church and the Churches," *passim*)—that is, that it is a sacrament; and, therefore, as much of infants as of adults, that they are regenerated by Baptism. I shall contend that you have done more. You do affix *some* meaning to Baptism. You do allow of some-



thing that it may signify. Nay, as we have seen, by an extraordinary contradiction of your original theory, you do grant to baptism an inward part; which you make an essential concomitant of a true baptism. ("The Church and the Churches," p. 386.) In making this inward part, however, to be faith, and this concomitant conversion, (Letter, p. 15; see also your book, p. 383, in which conversion is made a synonym of "regeneration," and to consist of an "experience" and an "awakening,") you deny the applicability of Baptism to infants, who are incapable of the exercise of faith and of the process of conversion, or else the ordinance applied to them is a *second* baptism. Now, there is nothing that so much illustrates the subtle spirit which I spoke of animating Evangelicalism as this denial of the applicability of Baptism to infants. For if, with a true conception of what grace is, we consider Baptism as God's sacrament, independent and objective, we perceive that it is not altered by application to infants from one varying nature. It is only by a depreciation of the reality of the *gifts* of grace that a special difficulty should present itself to you, in their case, contrasted with that of adults. If you elicit God's part in man's salvation, and swallow up the gift of the former in the qualification of the latter, then, as infants cannot co-operate in the work of salvation, and in them there can exist no qualification, the idea of grace, connected with Baptism, in their case, must appear a contradiction. It is not any silence in scripture as to *infant* Baptism that occasions the preponderance of difficulty, for whatever belongs as of essence to Baptism (and the enquiry is as to its essence), cannot be divided from it in the case of infants, or Baptism were no longer Baptism: but your difficulty arises from the fatal misapprehension of the ordinance in itself, and a failure to perceive the true and sovereign office of the *Giver* in the economy of grace. How does this appear? You confound regeneration and conversion! You make regeneration to consist of an "experience" and an "awakening." You identify a gift from God, with a process of man's revolted mind turning to God. You make the gift of the new birth imparted

from Christ, equivalent with certain conscious emotions of the soul. Infants, therefore, are not capable of regeneration.

It is strange you did not reflect in what a position of prevarication this places you. For if you do not hold infants capable of regeneration, how can you pray God, as in the office for baptising infants you do, that they *may* be regenerated, and pronounce after Baptism that they are so? No subtle distinction can aught avail to deceive either its author or his readers here. It is not predicating of infants a process which, for aught you know, *may* have passed upon them, and which therefore you may say you cannot undertake to assert does not belong to them. It is predicating of infants a process which you believe has not and cannot take place in any case.

Hear Bishop Taylor: "If it be objected that to the new birth are required dispositions of our own, which are to be wrought by and in them that have the use of reason, this is wholly *against the analogy of a new birth*, in which the person to be born is wholly *passive*, and *hath put into him* the principle that will in time produce its proper effects." Unless this be so, unless regeneration be an act of God, independent on the co-operating concurrence of its subject, just as the first generation is on the concurrence of its subject, unless the passivity of the subject consist with this work of grace, unless we look out of the mind of man for its author and origin, infants cannot be capable of it, for they are certainly wholly passive. And Baptism, concerned in some way with regeneration, must, in its application to infants, be involved in the most hopeless confusion. But perceive this, and the difficulties vanish, and the whole question resolves itself into one, on the first principles of the Christian scheme. You *must* indeed be thrown into inextricable confusion, while your theory, denying that grace which can alone be the real "inward part" of Baptism, yet proceeds on the unmeaning assumption that the disposition of worthy reception is the thing signified, and an actual component of the sacrament. You *must* be thrown into inextricable confusion while you maintain the practice of infant Baptism, and yet place all the meaning and worth of Baptism in

a condition which infants cannot possess, and a process which infants cannot undergo. You *must* be thrown into inextricable confusion, in short, while you attempt the unnatural conjunction of your bald and mutilated theory with those declarations and practices of the Church which are founded on a platform of dogmatic truth entirely repugnant to your religious system.

Your unwillingness to acknowledge Baptism to be the means of regeneration arises from your taking regeneration out of the hands of God, and placing it in a process subjective to the mind. You merge the gift in the qualification, and, as the qualification certainly resides in the receiver, empty Baptism of all objective efficacy. You fall short of Gospel fulness. You ignore one part of the Gospel. For *besides* conversion, that Gospel makes mention of regeneration; in therefore reducing the latter to the signification of the former, you proscribe it. You absorb the external realities of Christianity into self. You make self the measure and boundary of the gifts of God, and fail to look out of the depths of man's heart for the origin and mainspring of his renewal. You cannot conceive of grace except as an individual process, and therefore you transform the Gospel from a system of means to energise and transfuse grace, into an exhibition of motives to set man's own capacities in motion. You do not admit this indeed in so many words, but this is the ultimate meaning of your theory. How else do you call regeneration conversion? How else do you find it difficult to perceive the fitness of Baptism in the case of infants, as much so as in the case of adults? Surely, if grace be a gift, and regeneration a work independent on man's accession, there is no difficulty in perceiving the congruity of its operation in the case of infants; nay, in their case, such a perception presents the most perfect realisation of God's work in salvation. For here is no alloy of human obstinacy, no obstruction of a thawing, yet still not yet wholly thawed heart, no remains of a corrupted and rebellious will, deforming and marring the beautiful proportions of the work of grace. Here, as in that work of His hands, the old creation, God wholly triumphs in a



far greater, the new; moulds and fashions a nature unreservedly at His command—and snatches to Himself, unresisted, a link from the chain of transmitted defilement.

Where, then, is the difficulty of infant Baptism upon which you are so afraid to venture? If regeneration be a gift of God, why not Baptism the instrument of its conveyance? And if, not a work of man, it can be wrought on infants as well as on adults, why not infants baptised? The true difference is not between the baptism applied, or the spiritual effect to be produced, but between the respective states of the recipients, which render in the one case an active qualification necessary to remove the obstruction of a revolted will, in the other impossible and unnecessary. Baptism an object of faith, not a subject of feeling, represents a machinery external to ourselves; the operation of God, the God-man, Grace, the Holy Spirit. You, failing to recognise the originating process of this machinery in the work of man's salvation, cannot perceive the essential office of Baptism, as connected with this machinery, in the Christian scheme. If grace be an objective gift on the part of God, why, I ask, do you deny Baptism to be the medium through which God is pleased to bestow it? Because the office is appropriated to another medium? or because grace cannot be bestowed through a medium? No. But because *you provide no place in your theory for the operation of an objective gift*, and that what you call *grace*, is but the exercise of an internal qualification. Therefore it is, that all of spiritual signification connected with Baptism you make not a gift coming from God, but a disposition brought to it by man; and Baptism not conferring this disposition,—for it is of course possessed before,—is nothing but a sign—a “proclamation” to the world—an “avowal” before men—of its possession. You absolutely eliminate from Baptism the most important thing which the Church connects with it,—and in this point of view the Church's theory would appear an addition to, rather than a contradiction of, yours,—though, nevertheless, your very restriction to Baptism of that exclusively which she associates with



other constituents is a contradiction of hers. In your definition and description of Baptism, you speak of any way entering into its consideration two things only, the washing with water, and man's faith. The Church of a washing with water, *and* the recipient's faith, *and* the gift of the new birth.

To what religion, then, belongs your theory, which actually banishes the new birth from salvation? Will you say that you preserve the idea of the new birth under the common title of conversion? I answer, that the word conversion, in its legitimate use, expresses a totally distinct meaning, referring only to the subduing of man's revolting will to the ascendance of a better principle. But you will perhaps feel yourself compelled, by a choice of evils, to contend that you use the term conversion not to express this its appropriate idea, but regeneration in its characteristic import. But then you have defined this regeneration, which you contend is synonymous with "conversion," by those very attributes which belong to the latter alone; and as we have seen, the prime obstacle to admitting this spiritual process to be connected with Baptism, any other way than as in the receiver, is its character as the subjective process which is thereby designated. The Church assumes, in the case of the adult, the previous occurrence of this process of "conversion," (in infants it cannot occur,) as a revolted will unsubdued is a fatal obstruction to God's grace. But over and beyond this, which is not Christian salvation, any more than it is Socinian, (for Socinianism, and indeed all religions, inculcate the necessity of conversion,) she directs the candidate for Baptism to look for a peculiar and *special* gift, advancing to the *status* of a real and actual, though mysterious, union with that "Quickening Spirit" the Lord's divine Humanity—the beginning and impartor of a new creation—which gift she calls regeneration. Now this gift she declares Baptism to be the medium of bestowal, and it is *by really denying this gift* that you deny the office of Baptism as its conveyance. Your substitution, therefore, of the word conversion, as proposed, in the Apostle's language concerning Baptism, the instrument of God conveying His

gifts, is, I consider, a liberty taken with the Word of God. That it mars the richness of the Apostle's meaning; that it results from a spirit which tends to invade the prerogative of God; presumes to mark out as within man's province the wonders, unutterable and unknown and inconceivable, which He has wrought within the members of His Son; affixes a measure to the breadth and length and depth and height of that which passes knowledge, is as certainly evident to every Catholic minded reader of the Bible. No. St. Paul in these passages refers to a work accomplished in Baptism, whose majesty the word conversion cannot indicate, whose fulness it cannot measure, whose limit, circumscribed only within the thoughts of the Eternal, no tongue of angel can define, no word of man, which goes no further than its ascertained meaning, is at all worthy to express. He speaks of the grafting on to the "New Head of man's race," in whom abides the Godhead bodily — of the insertion into that Manhood of the Incarnate Son, where is the fulness of grace and truth, and the Spirit without measure indwelling — of that joining on to the Well-spring and Reservoir of life, which is the actual partaking of Christ's vivifying Humanity — of a bringing into that line in which alone the quickening grace of the New Adam can be infused or life bestowed — a having given to us everything, for it is having Christ substantially in His body, Who is "all things and in all!"

So the sacraments are the guardians of the doctrine of grace. They are the making of our salvation entirely over to God. The ascription to them of instrumentality in God's hand for the conveyance of grace, is an acknowledgment of God's part in our salvation — the establishment of this fundamental truth in Christianity, that beyond all our efforts, our reformations, our attainments, we must look for salvation to an external process, an objective economy founded on, and centreing in, the Incarnation of our blessed Lord. Sacraments are the correlatives of this economy, and your theory is a denial of sacraments, simply because it is a denial of this economy. You cannot reason upon sacramental grace in

the abstract, because your theory precludes your admitting abstract grace at all; and your denial of Baptismal *gift* is the expression of a system in reality set up in opposition to the Divine economy of the *Giver*, in the work of salvation.

And what is the secret of modern anti-Christianity, but the same spirit which impels you to subordinate the gift of God to man's qualification, to individualise objective truth,—that is, to deny it,—to absorb into self all the realities, or all that should be the realities, of Christianity? In its present stage, Evangelicalism in this country, has not yet proceeded to discard the nominal possession of those phrases which mark the realities of Christ's religion. The terms "Grace," "Regeneration," do indeed point to external realities. But already are these mere phrases, or, if they signify anything, are merely used to express conditions in man's own mind and being. Do you demur to this? Nay, this brief examination of your theory not only points to this as the law, but elucidates it as a fact. *For "Grace," in the case of Baptism, you substitute "faith," and for "Regeneration," "conversion."*

Now when this process is logically followed out, men become precipitated into the ocean of Pantheism. Subjecting all religion to self, they do not accept as a first principle the *objective* truth of Christianity, but take upon themselves to construct whatever religion may seem to correspond to the needs of their own minds, and which religion, indeed, is even then only an embodiment of their own aspirations, only the shade flung upon the canvass by the thronging dreams of an imagination unshackled by the restraints of an external standard, till at last the soul makes her own genius, or her own conceptions, or her own reachings after "truth and good," *just as you make faith*, her Saviour.

But I must conclude. The length of this letter has checked a line of consideration which I had thought somewhat to extend. For I never met with any expression of the "Evangelical" system, so illustrative of its application as your own. It was this tempted me to a reply. I am anxious to avoid the charge of presumption, drawn from any appearance of an intention to



contribute towards the elucidation of the Baptismal Question. But your recent publication is commended to the perusal of the laity. It seems to propose itself, too, as a resolver of doubts, and a methodiser of confusion. In my view, it is doubt merely formed into a system, and "confusion worse confounded." If, however, we of the laity are called upon to read it, it is of course to be expected we should form an opinion. *I have* read it, and having formed an opinion so very derogatory to your theological and ecclesiastical positions as that which this letter conveys, to express it is candour, not presumption.

I wish the attention of the laity to be directed to the real import of those principles, upon which the Second Reformation is to proceed, and upon which the Church of the future is to be constructed. I wish them seriously to inquire whether that Reformation, in its ultimate meaning, be not the denial of Sacraments—the denial of Grace—the etherialising of the substance of Christianity—the destruction of the Objects of faith—the supremacy of self in the processes of salvation—the banishing of Christ as a Person and an Operator from His Church!

I am,

Rev. Sir,

Your obedient, faithful servant,

A LIVERPOOL LAYMAN.

LIVERPOOL, 6TH JULY, 1851.









